



# Murray Darling Association Inc.

[admin@mda.asn.au](mailto:admin@mda.asn.au)

[www.mda.asn.au](http://www.mda.asn.au)

T (03) 5480 3805

ABN: 64 636 490 493

463 High Street

P.O. Box 1268

**Region 11 Meeting**  
**1:08pm, Friday 19 November**  
**Via Zoom**

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## **MINUTES – Friday 19 November 2021**

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### **Acknowledgement to Country**

I would like to acknowledge all first nations people as the traditional custodians of the lands on which we gather today. I would also like to pay respect to elders both past, present and emerging and extend that respect to any Aboriginal Australians present today.

### **1. ATTENDANCE**

#### **1.1 Present**

Cr John Campbell - Chair	Gunnedah Shire Council
Cr Jamie Chaffey	Gunnedah Shire Council
Cr Greg Sauer	Tenterfield Shire Council
Cr Carol Sparks	Glen Innes Severn Council
Emma Bradbury	Chief Executive Officer, Murray Darling Association
Annabelle Guest*	Regional Engagement Officer, Murray-Darling Basin Authority
Jane Humphries*	Local Engagement Officer, Northern Basin Section

\* Non-member– attendance by invitation

#### **1.2 Apologies**

Cr Frances Young	Gwydir Shire Council
Craig Bennett, GM	Glen Innes Severn Council
Andrew Johns, DPES	Gunnedah Shire Council

**Action: That the apologies be accepted**

**Move Cr G Sauer/Cr C Sparks Carried**

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### **2. WELCOME – Meeting commenced at 1:08pm**

Welcome by Councillor John Campbell.

Welcome to Cr Carol Sparks from Glen Innes Severn Council, who has recently joined Region 11

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### **3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Nil

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#### 4. MINUTES

**Motion:** That the minutes of the Murray Darling Association Inc Region 11 meeting held on 27 May 2021, as typed and circulated, be confirmed as a true record of the proceedings of that meeting.

**Action:** That the meeting minutes be accepted

**Moved Cr G Sauer/Cr J Chaffey Carried**

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#### 5. BUSINESS ARISING

NIL

#### 6. REPORTS

##### 6.1 Chief Executive Officer

- See attached CEO Report for November 2021
- New CEO Mark Lamb will commence on 1 December 2021 (Emma finishes on 30/11/2021)
- Emma thanked all members for their support over the years

##### 6.2 Chairman's report

I take this opportunity to advise that this is my last meeting as a delegate from Gunnedah Shire Council. I am not standing for re-election at the upcoming election.

When I was asked to be the GSC delegate I had very little knowledge or awareness of the vastness and complexity of the water issues in the MD Basin. It was a case of "out of sight out of mind" as it really did not affect me. I have really learned a lot during my time in this position. I would like to thank CEO Emma for her support, advice and camaraderie. Greg Sauer (Tenterfield) and Frances Young (Gwydir) have also been mainstays. My Mayor Jamie Chaffey and Director Andrew Johns also helped immensely during the early days. I also need to thank Annabelle Guest (MDBA) and Jane Humphries (CEWO) for their invaluable input to our region meetings. Those meetings have been, at times, extremely difficult to schedule. As we have a new CEO starting soon and with follow up from our region members my suggestion to the MDA Strategic Advisory Group, is that, we do a similar strategy as that has been done in Region 10 in separating the Region into northern and southern bi-regions with chairs in each. In Region 11's case this would be a very manageable scenario as we have the Gwydir River and its LGA's in the north and the Namoi River and its LGA's in the south. This is only a suggestion and is put out there for discussion. Once again thank you and I wish everyone all the best for the future.

John Campbell, Region 11 Chair

#### 7. GENERAL BUSINESS

7.1 NIL

#### 8. PRESENTATIONS

8.1 Jane Humphries - Local Engagement Officer, Northern Basin Section

- See attached presentation

8.2 Annabelle Guest - Regional Engagement Officer MDA

##### Current Conditions

- Most storages at or around 100%
- Gwydir – Copeton dam 89% capacity
- Namoi – Keepit 98% and Splitrock dam 45%
- Border Rivers – Glenlyon 95% Coolmunda Pindari 100%

- Irrigators have security for at least the next 2 years and can plan crops rather than scramble for water. Winter Crop Harvest - impacted by rain but high yields and good quality grain with strong prices. Summer crop prices strong and rain will benefit large plantings of cotton and sorghum

#### **MDBA**

Menindee Lakes – 110% capacity MDBA manages water between 640 GL and 450 GL. Water NSW manages when <450 GL. Planning on use of water managed by MDBA in Menindee early in the new year 2022 (authority communique)

Water Resource Plan (WRP) NSW is likely to submit 20 WRP's for NSW surface and ground water in 2022. These will be assessed by the MDBA when submitted.

Listening tours – Sir Angus Houston and the chief executive will continue listening tours in 2022 commencing with the Lachlan/Macquarie in mid-February and Western Qld in mid-March

Other

FPH – No progress in policy implementation

Non-Urban metering and Monitoring – next phase of implementation 1 Dec 2021

#### **9. APPRECIATIONS**

- Clr Sauer wanted to personally thank Clr John Campbell for his guidance and friendship over the years
- Clr Sparks thanked Emma Bradbury for all her work and for highlighting MDA
- Clr Chaffey thanked Clr John Campbell for his work for MDA over the years

#### **10. NEXT MEETING**

Next meeting date to be advised

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#### **11. CLOSE**

The meeting closed at 2.14pm



# CEO's Report

November 2021

Murray Darling Association Incorporated  
ABN 64 636 490 493

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## 1. Introduction and conclusion

It is with tremendous excitement, gratitude, and optimism for the future of the Murray Darling Association that I pen this, my last report as CEO of this remarkable organisation.

With all the indulgence of reflection, there will be plenty of ‘I’s in the following lines as I reflect on and where we have come in the almost 8 years I have been in the role, and the opportunities ahead as I vacate the space,

In that time we have seen the Basin community travel the often painful course from storm to norm, and now well into the deep reforms of the Murray-Darling Basin Plan. We have seen communities react to changing water availability and recognise that drought, climate change, agricultural practices, floods, technologies all contribute to the challenging but necessary balance of equitable water sharing, not just in the Basin but across Australia. We have also seen local government and the MDA lead the way in building consensus by sharing knowledge to understand the experience of communities beyond their own.

I am proud of my part in the role the MDA has played in making local leadership a national priority; in developing trust, unity, equity, and growth; increasing collaboration, connecting catchments and communities; recognising that our Plan is our future enabling us to regenerate a healthy, working Basin.

If these laudable achievements sound familiar, it is because these are the themes that have set the agenda for a national conversation through successive MDA National Conferences. Now recognised as a seminal event on the local government and water sector calendar, the MDA’s national conference and AGMs have been a highlight of my time in the role, but one that I will happily hand on to my successor.

And that brings me to my final, and more forward looking reflections. Few CEO’s have the privilege of handing their legacy on to a more capable and experienced team than I have in the current Board and our incoming CEO, Mark Lamb. Under their collective leadership I have every confidence that the MDA will continue to prosecute the case for local government to be afforded a role in the national decision making framework as we implement further reforms, to elevate local issues to the regional and the national agenda, and to serve the needs of our members and stakeholders well into the future.

My final word is, of course to acknowledge the wonderful experience I have had in working with our amazing members and stakeholders; with this Board who manage time and again to carve consensus from chaos; with our amazing Treasurer Peter George who has wrangled efficiencies and transparency that are the envy of any in the sector; with my dream-team of staff who have consistently delivered beyond all expectations; and most particularly with David Thurley, National President since 2015.

Working for and with David has been a joy and an honour. His unwavering support and professionalism, his wit and intellect, and his quiet but steely leadership have so often smoothed the seemingly insurmountable to clear a path to a better way. And I thank David (and Sue!) for all their incredible work, their friendship and great good humour.

I am beyond grateful for my time at the MDA. I leave the job knowing our collective efforts have made a difference and that momentum is gathering! Local leadership - it’s a national priority.

## 2. Key Meetings and Engagement

Date	Event/meeting	Location
15/10/21	Nicole Emara – CSIRO	Held Virtually
15/10/21	SQNNSW Drought Resilience Hub Partner / Member workshop	Held Virtually
18/10/21	Families and Communities Program Strong and Resilient Communities (SARC) Activity – Inclusive Communities Grants	Held Virtually
26/10/21	MDA CEO Recruitment – Long-list	Held Virtually
27/10/21	Deanne Armstrong – C4EM	Echuca
27/10/21	MDA / CSIRO – Science and Advisory Committee	Held Virtually
4/11/21 – 5/11/21	MDA CEO Recruitment – Panel Interviews	Albury
9/11/21	ONE Basin CRC: All Partner Meeting	Held Virtually
10/11/21	MDA CEO Recruitment – 2 <sup>nd</sup> Stage Interview to the Board	Albury / Held Virtually
10/11/21	MDA Planning Committee Meeting	Held Virtually
11/11/21	MDBA – November Peak Groups Briefing [SEC=OFFICIAL]	Held Virtually
12/11/21	SA Inter-regional meeting 2021/21 – Planning Meeting	Held Virtually
15/11/21	Murray Darling Association Briefing – Nick McBride	Held Virtually
17/11/21	Senator Perin Davey	Deniliquin
22/11/21	Hon Mark Coulton MP	Held Virtually
24/11/21	The Hon Melinda Pavey MP – NSW Minister for Water	Held Virtually
24/11/21	The NWGA Advisory Body meeting (Presentation to the National Water Grid Advisory Body)	Held Virtually



**Emma Bradbury**  
Chief Executive Officer

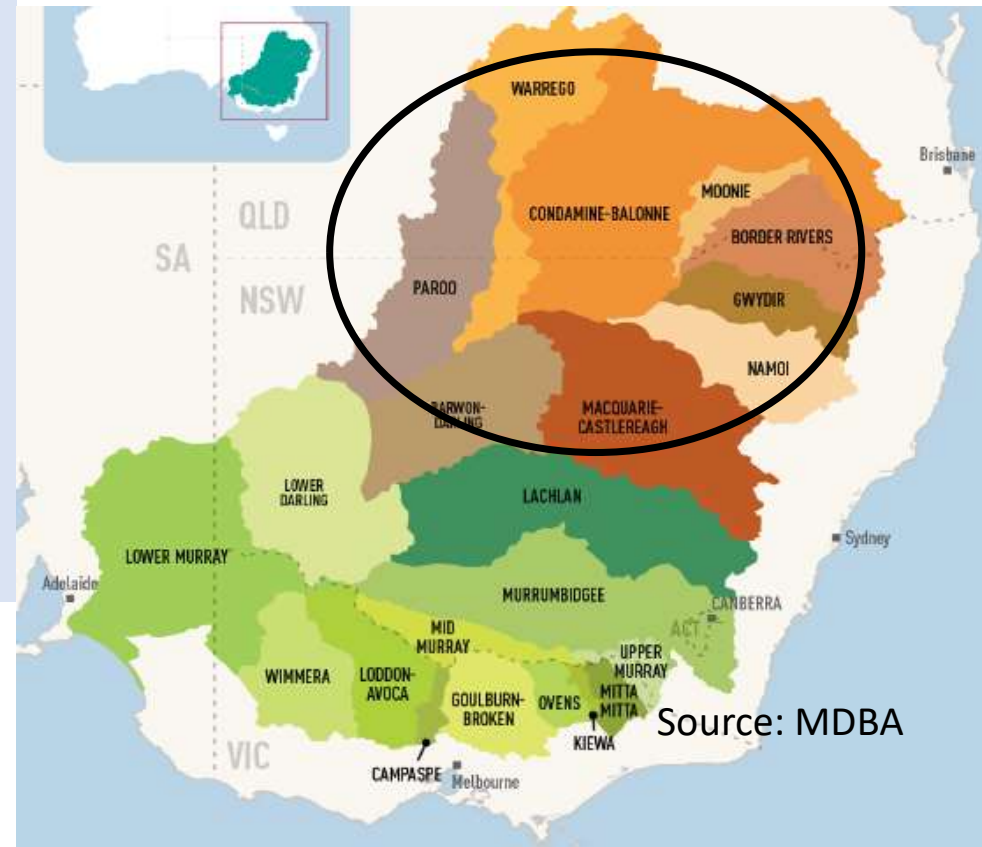
# Northern Murray-Darling Basin - Environmental Water & Conditions Update

– Presentation for MDA Region 11

Jane Humphries, Local Engagement Officer, Northern Basin Section, 19 November 2021

On behalf of CEWO North Basin Team: Mike Peat, Nerida Sloane, Hayley Behnke, Liz Webb, Greg Ringwood, Dave Weldrake, Brooke Sargent, Jason Wilson, Sall Dickinson, Jane Humphries

*Disclaimer: Information shared is to the best of CEWO knowledge and from data that was available to the current date and is shared for information and communication purposes. Do not rely on for legal purposes.*



Source: MDBA



The department acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Australia and their continuing connection to land, sea environment, water and community. We pay our respect to the Traditional Custodians, their culture, and elders both past and present.

# Overview of presentation

1. What CEWO does and the need for water for environment
2. Engaging with Communities
2. Summary of Environmental water deliveries 2020-21
3. Current CEWO (& NSW) holding and deliveries
4. Planning, delivery and contingencies for 2021-22
5. Advice from MDA on updates and information needs
6. Contacts







The **Commonwealth Environmental Water Office** was created to manage water for the environment. The Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder is responsible for: deciding the best way to use the [water for the environment](#) that is owned by the Australian Government.

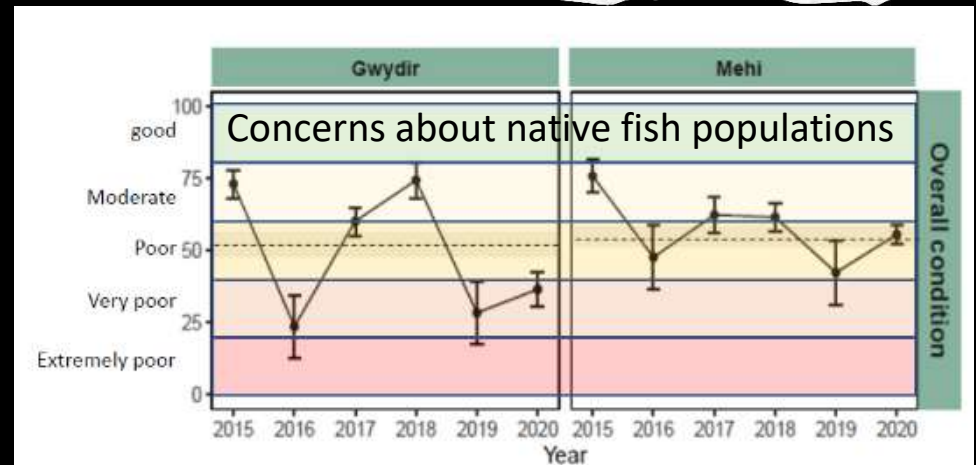
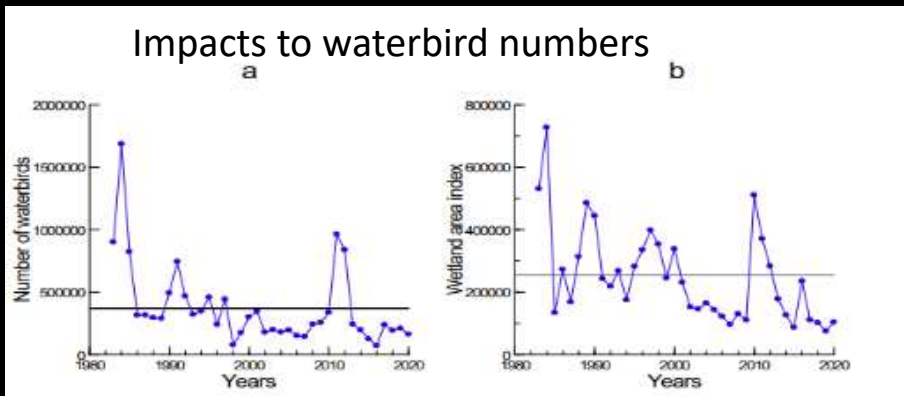
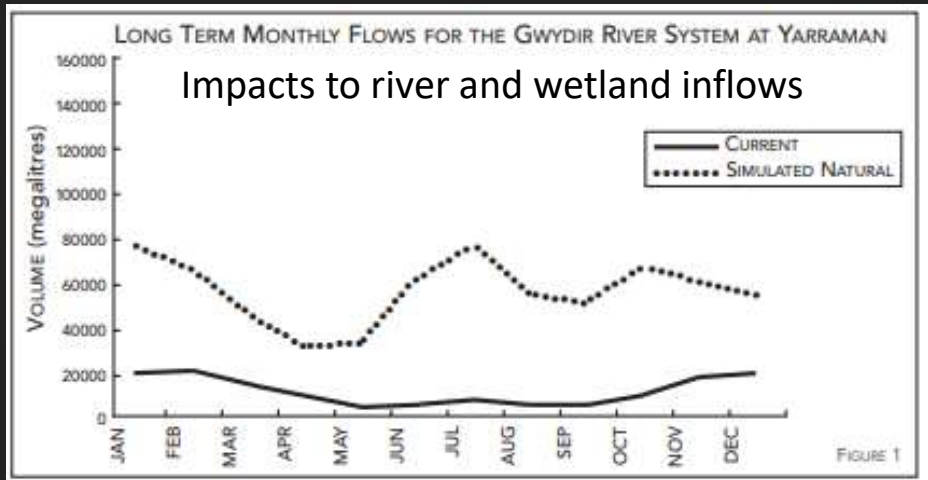
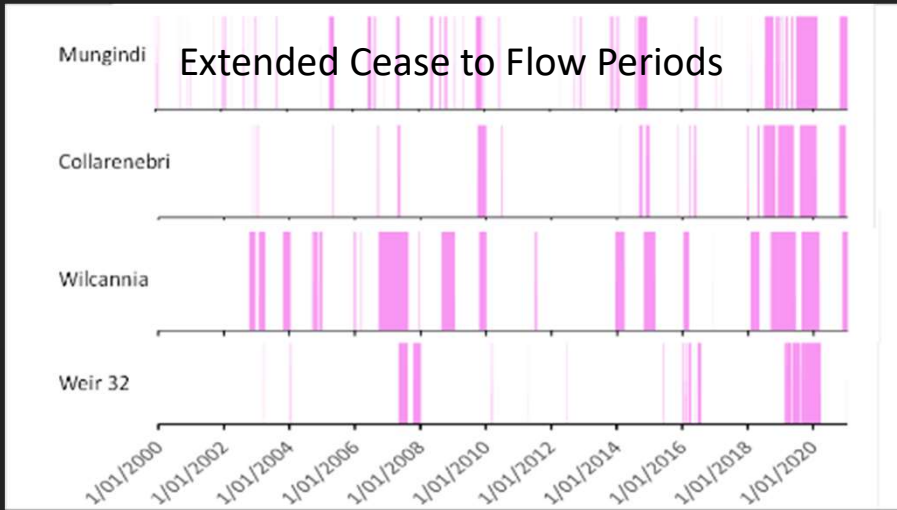
*(While the **Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment** is responsible for: buying water from entitlement holders and investing in more efficient irrigation so there is more water available in the system to keep rivers, lakes and wetlands healthy. This is called 'recovering water'.)*



**Australian Government**  
**Commonwealth Environmental Water Office**

# Why the need for water for the environment?

# System changes and extraction

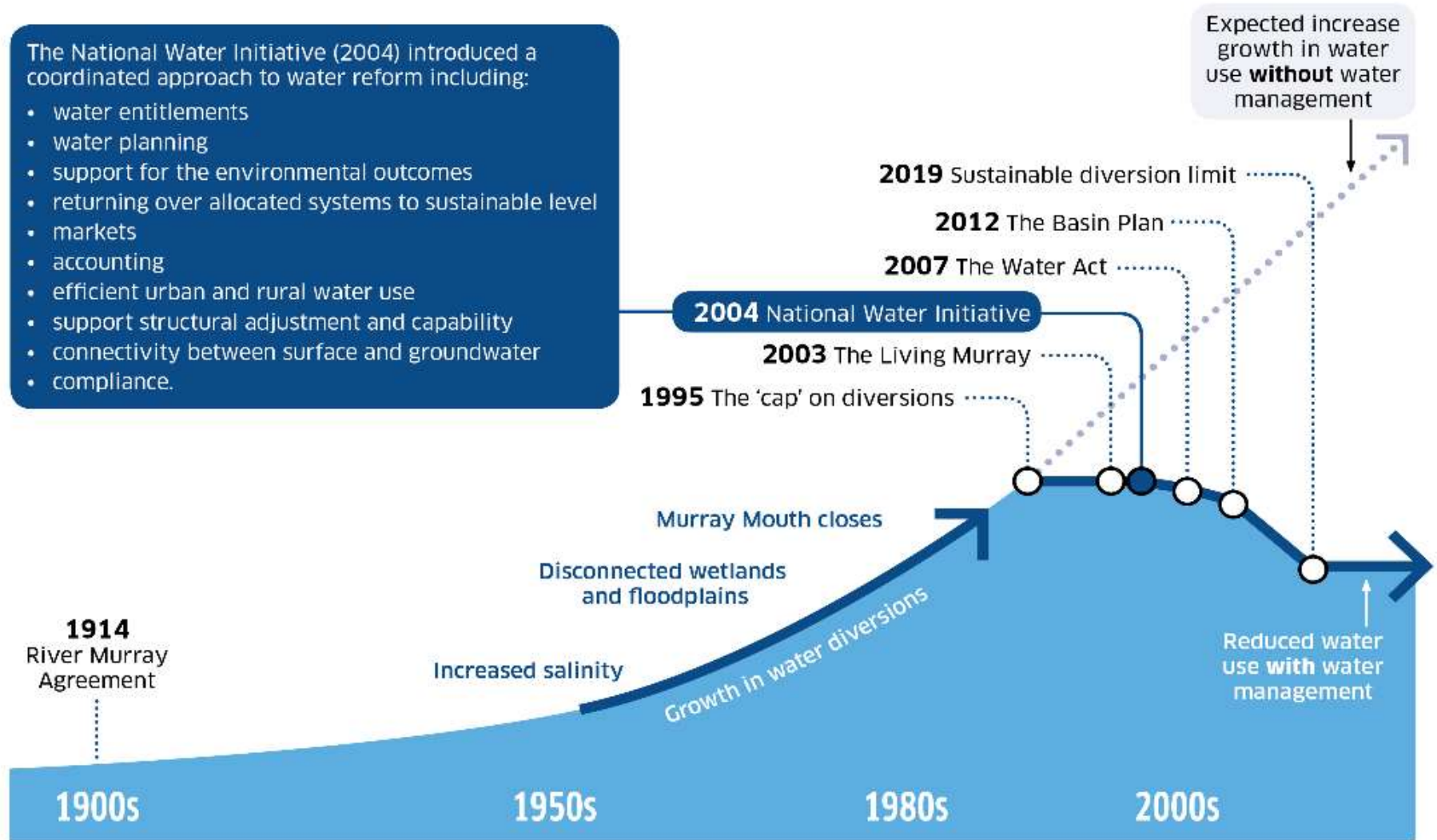




# History of water reform in the Basin

The National Water Initiative (2004) introduced a coordinated approach to water reform including:

- water entitlements
- water planning
- support for the environmental outcomes
- returning over allocated systems to sustainable level
- markets
- accounting
- efficient urban and rural water use
- support structural adjustment and capability
- connectivity between surface and groundwater
- compliance.



From MDBA

## Working together – Cooperate, Collaborate, Complement:

- NSW & QLD Environmental Water Groups in Environment, Energy and Science Sections – Key partners – Planning, Delivery, Management, Monitoring
- WaterNSW & SunWater (Qld) - Delivery and advice re delivery planning
- Advisory and Monitoring – NSW EES, Qld & NSW Fisheries & Science, Monitoring, Evaluation and Research (MER - UNE & 2rog), MDBA, NPWS, NSW Env. Water Advisory Groups (EWAGs - Gwydir, Macquarie)
- Advice and local knowledge – local landholders, local Aboriginal community, irrigation sector, fishing people, other interested community members
- Engagement and two-way knowledge sharing and building – MDBA REOs, EES Local officers, NPWS, MER (UNE/2rog), Local Councils, LLS, Fishing clubs, Aboriginal Community, Community groups, Schools +++ .....





# Community engagement

- **WHYS** – water for the environment is community water, community involvement, local and connections, local knowledge and involvement, improved deliveries and outcomes
- **WHOMs** - other departments, organizations in water, NRM and local area, monitoring, schools, local Aboriginal groups and people, landholders, irrigation, ++
- **HOWs** - Two -way, sharing knowledge and experiences, updates, maps, Facebook, Twitters, calls, videos, Zoom online
- **WHEREs** - places, on the ground, meetings, visits, focus is where manage water

RECENT ACTIVITIES (COVID has affected face to face opportunities):

- Schools Nov – Dec 2020 & Feb, May 2021
- Working on engagement jointly with EES, MDBA REOs, MER, NPWS
- NB Environmental Water Research and Monitoring Forum
- MDA Wentworth Forum
- MDBA Listening Tour
- Monitoring and community visits
- Visiting sites and people
- Online meetings and webinars





# CEWO Links and based with communities

## CEWO Local Engagement Officers

Berri:  
Michelle  
Campbell



Mildura:  
Richard  
Mintern



Wodonga:  
Anthony  
Wilson



Wagga  
Wagga:  
Erin  
Lenon



Griffith:  
Michele  
Groat



Walgett:  
Jason  
Wilson



Goondiwindi  
Sall  
Dickinson



More:  
Jane  
Humphries



# CEWO ENTITLEMENTS



Qld Warrego - 39.5

Condamine-Balonne  
- River 1.1  
- Overland Flow 96.7

Lower Balonne - River 68.3

NSW Warrego - 17.8

Barwon-Darling - 26.6

= Dam entitlements

= River entitlements

= Overland entitlements

Nebine - River 5.9

Moonie - River 5.7

TOTAL NB  
- 568.2 GL

Qld BR - Dam 15.3  
- River 19.4

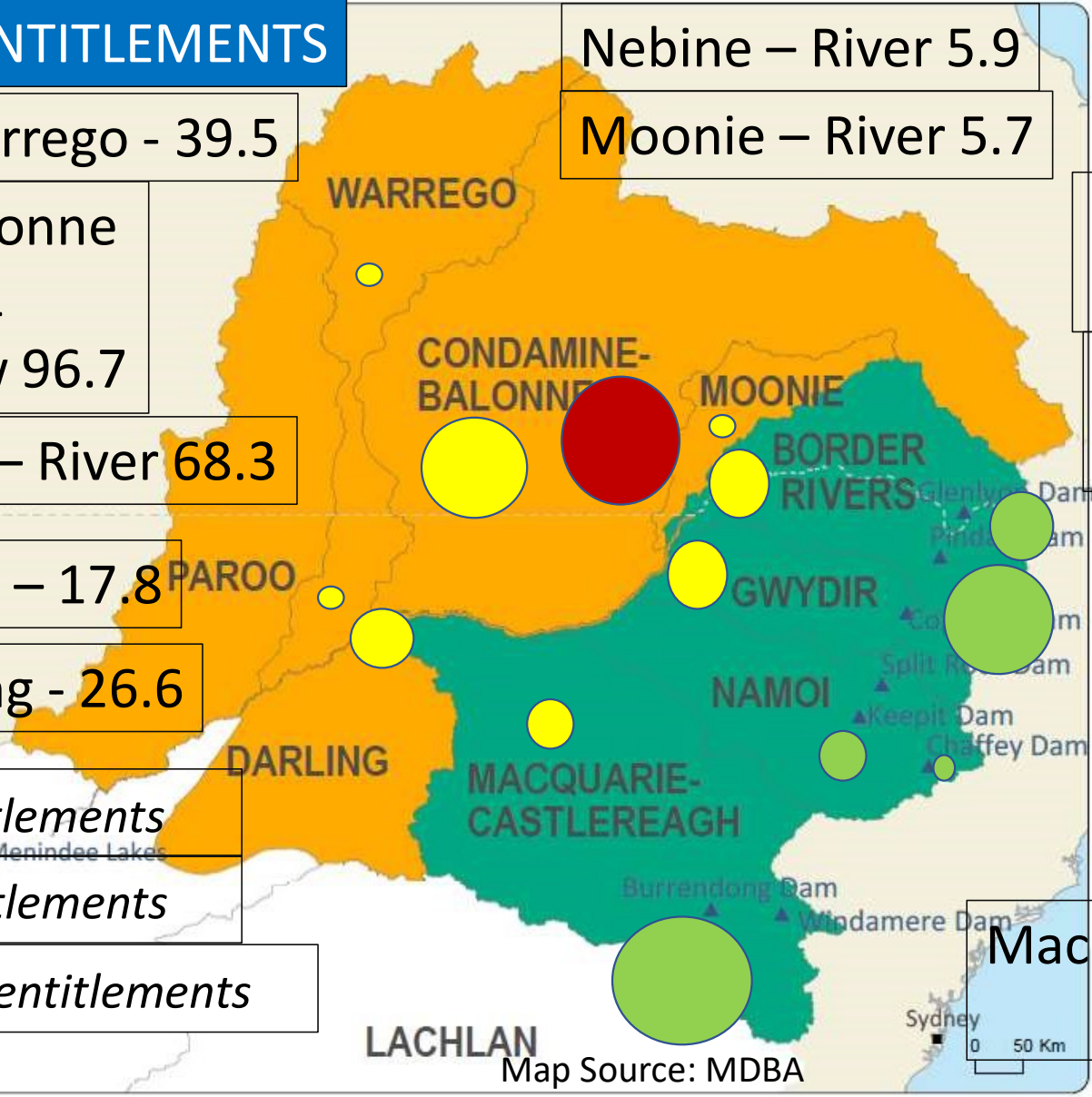
NSW BR - Dam 2.8  
- River 1.4

Gwydir - Dam 94  
- River 20.5

Namoi - Dam 13.6

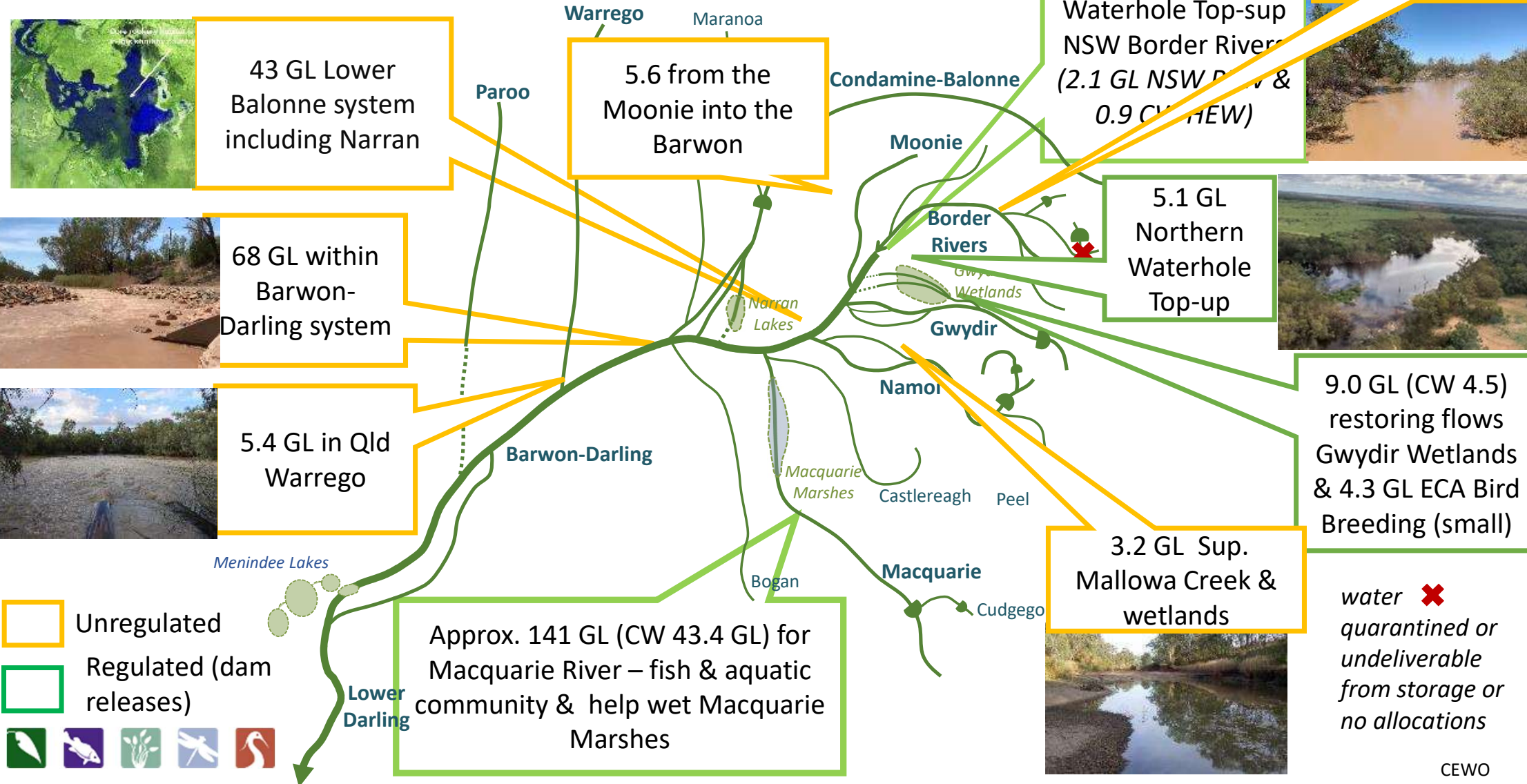
Peel - Dam 1.3

Macquarie - Dam 125.7  
- River 8.2



Map Source: MDBA

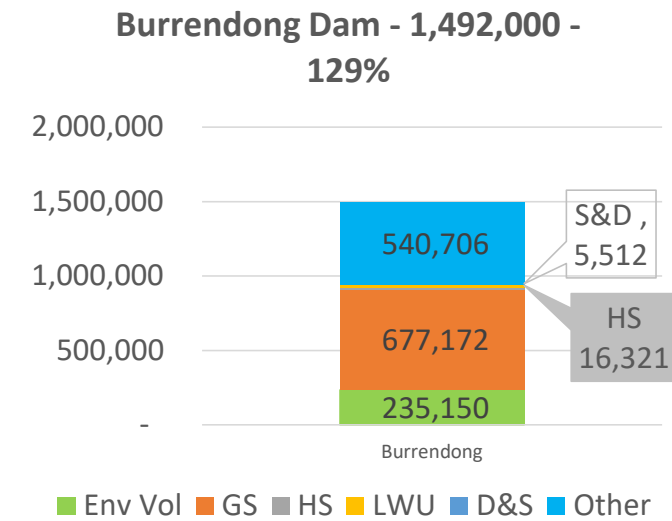
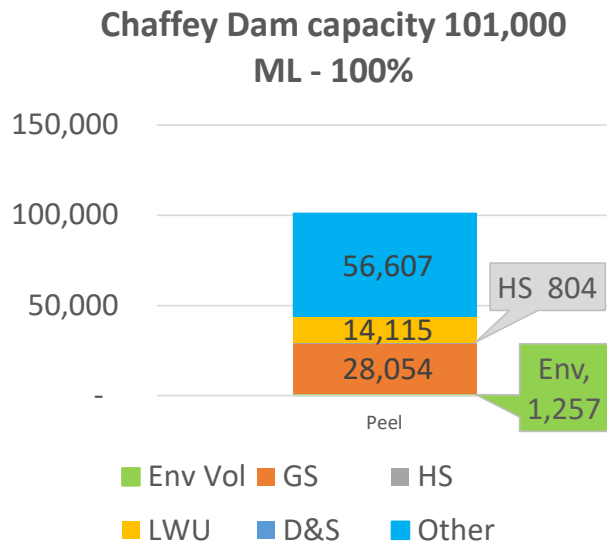
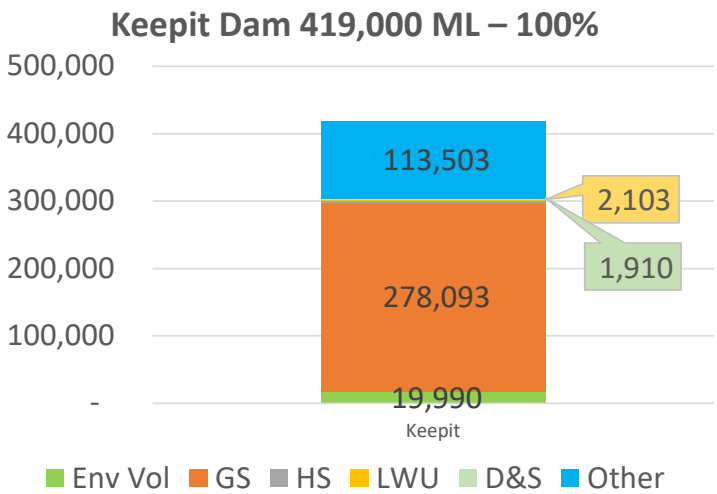
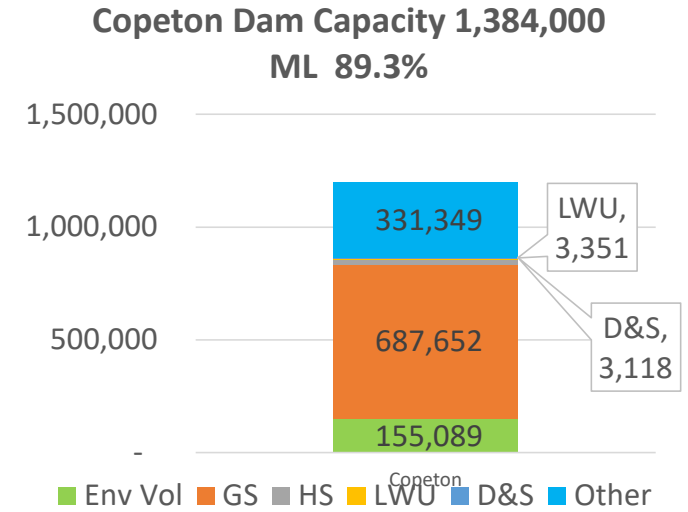
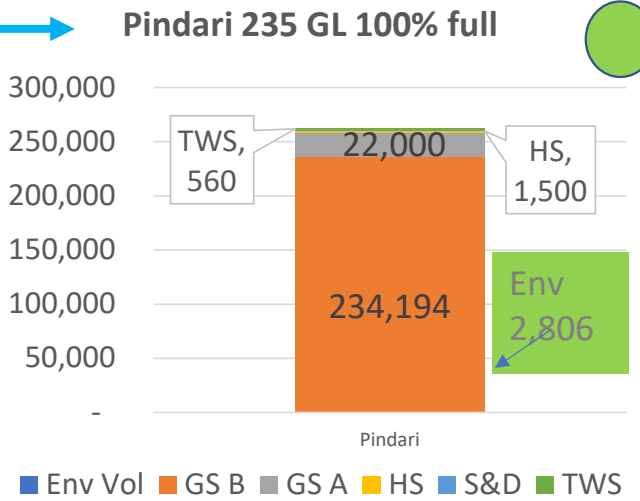
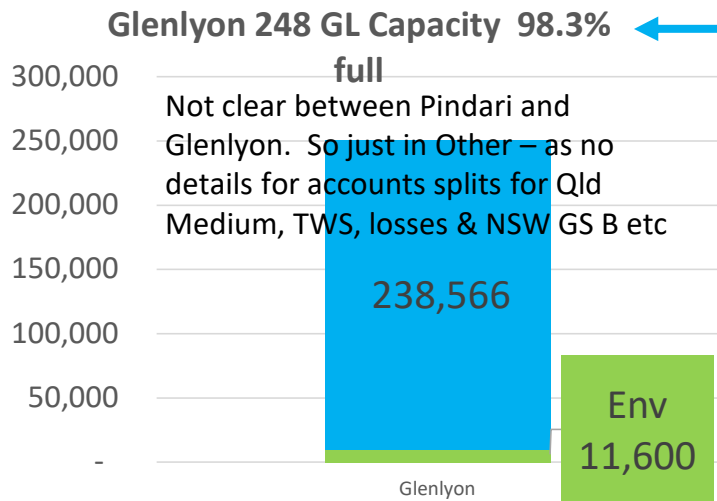
# Summary of 2020-21 environmental watering





# ENVIRONMENT- IRRIGATION - OTHER- DAM VOLUMES AT 18 NOV 2021

**TOTAL NB WfEnv- 414.3 GL 11%**



Source: based on information drawn from WaterNSW Insights

WfEnv = Water for the Environment

# Water Management Plan 2021-22

Available On website  
[Northern Murray-Darling Basin 2021-22 Planning Overview \(awe.gov.au\)](https://www.environment.gov.au/water/cewo/publications#event-updates)

Or can mail/email out

Current CEWO events and updates on website  
<https://www.environment.gov.au/water/cewo/publications#event-updates>  
 Or can mail/email out

## Healthy Rivers, Healthy Communities Northern Murray-Darling Basin

Planning for 2021-22

**Working with First Nations**  
 The Commonwealth Environmental Water Office pays respect to the Traditional Owners and First Nations of the Murray-Darling Basin.  
 We acknowledge their enduring cultural, social, environmental, spiritual and economic connection to the rivers, wetlands and floodplains of the Basin. We are committed to continuously improving how we work with First Nations across the Basin to manage water for the environment.



**Condamine-Balonne**  
 Support recovery of native fish across the Lower Balonne. Rebuild important waterbird habitat at Narran Lakes. Enhance connection with Barwon-Darling system.



**Warrego**  
 Increase connection with Darling River. Maintain health of the Warrego floodplain.



**Barwon-Darling**  
 Protect unregulated flows to refresh refuge pools, improve water quality, boost native fish health and promote fish movement along the Barwon-Darling.



**Macquarie**  
 Support drought recovery of Macquarie Marshes, including at Ramsar and waterbird breeding sites. Support native fish breeding and growth.

We plan water use scenarios for very dry through to very wet conditions and adapt to whatever season eventuates. Rivers in the northern Basin can switch from being dry to in flood within days or weeks. In times of drought, rivers can shrink back to small pools or dry up completely. The return of wetter conditions provides an opportunity for rivers to flow from top to bottom and reconnect to important wetlands. These are critical times for plants and animals to feed and breed and recover from the drought. Native fish take the opportunity to move throughout the river system and build resilience for when the dry times return.



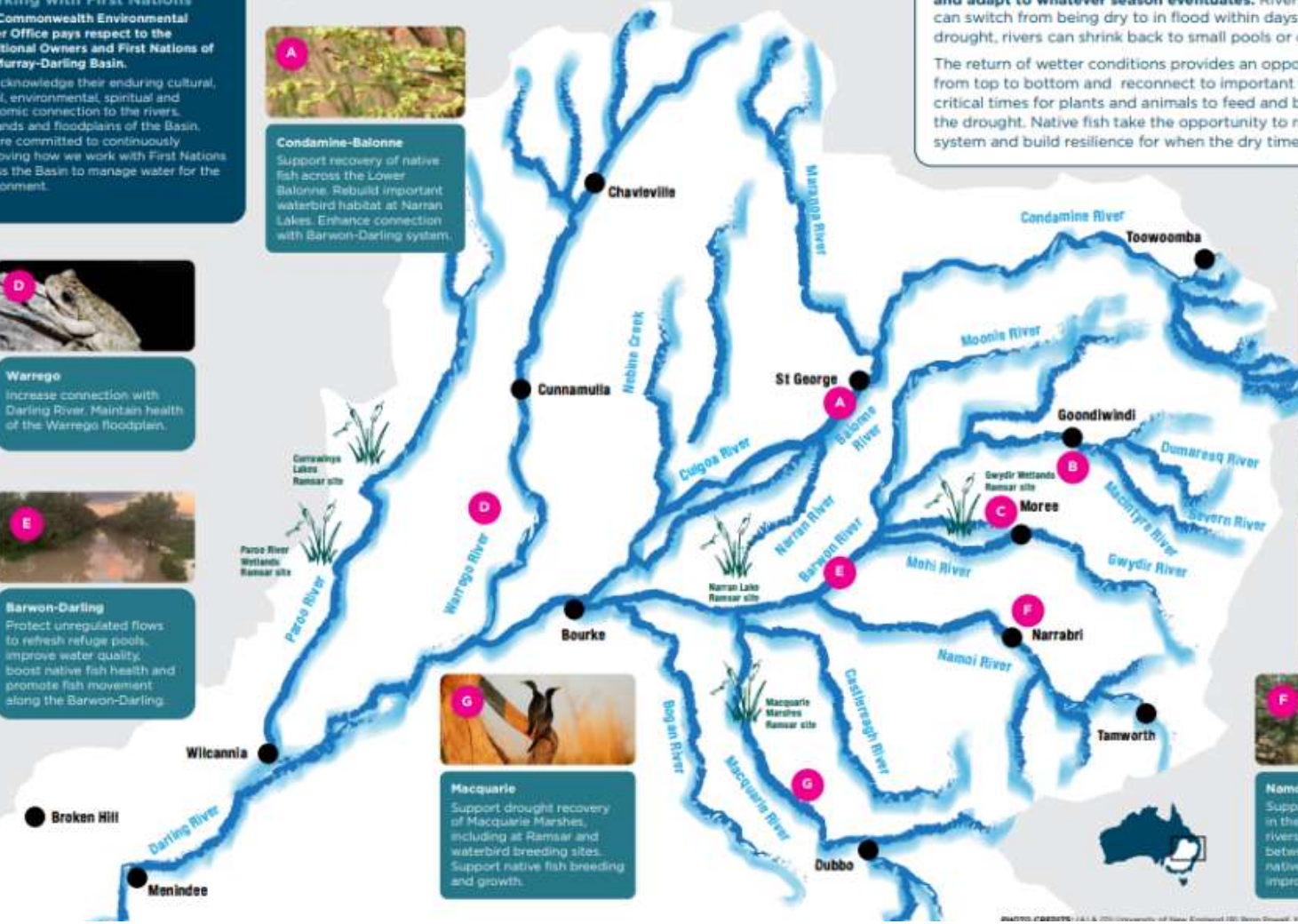
**Border Rivers**  
 Support recovery of native fish, particularly in the Border Rivers main channels. Enhance connection with Barwon system.



**Gwydir**  
 Restore condition of key wetland areas along Mallowa Creek, Carolee Creek, and the Lower Gwydir and Gingham watercourses. Enhance connection between Gwydir and Barwon systems.



**Namoi**  
 Support drought recovery in the Namoi and Peel rivers. Increase connection between habitats. Support native fish movement and improve fish health.



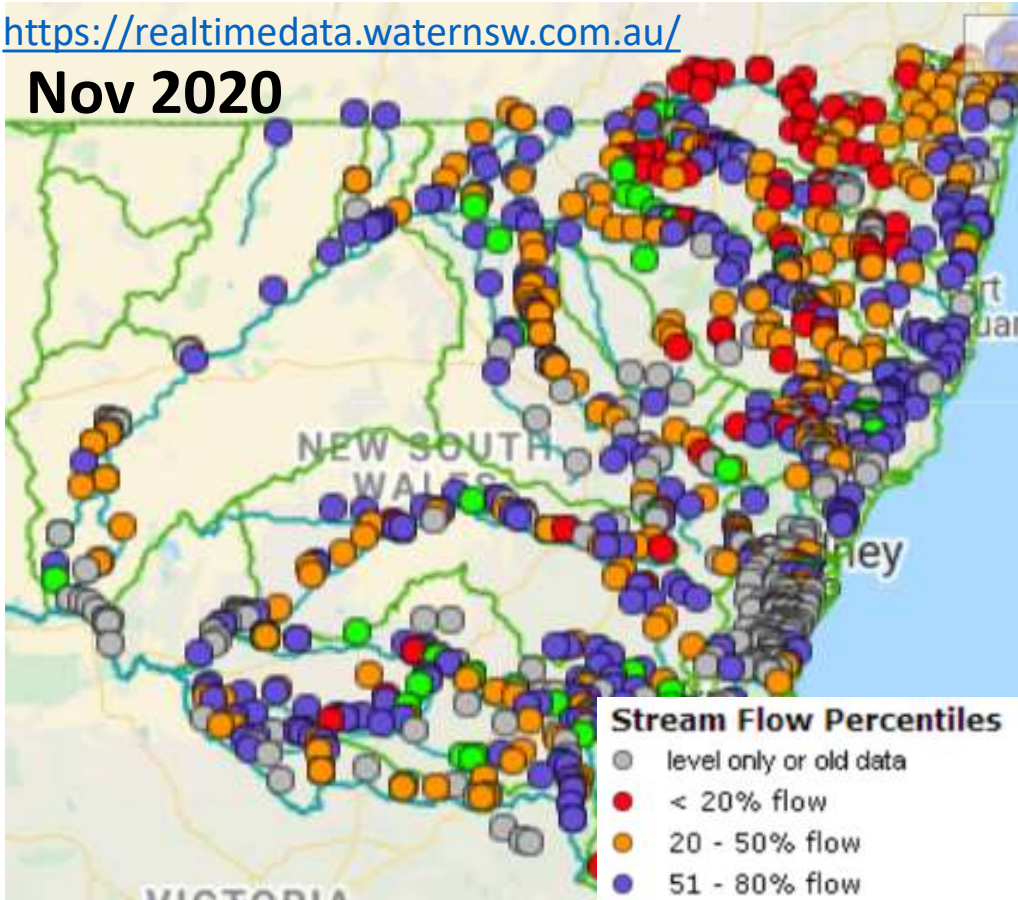
SOURCE: CEWO, DEPARTMENT OF WATER, ENVIRONMENT AND HERITAGE, 2019. CEWO, DEPARTMENT OF WATER, ENVIRONMENT AND HERITAGE, 2019. CEWO, DEPARTMENT OF WATER, ENVIRONMENT AND HERITAGE, 2019.



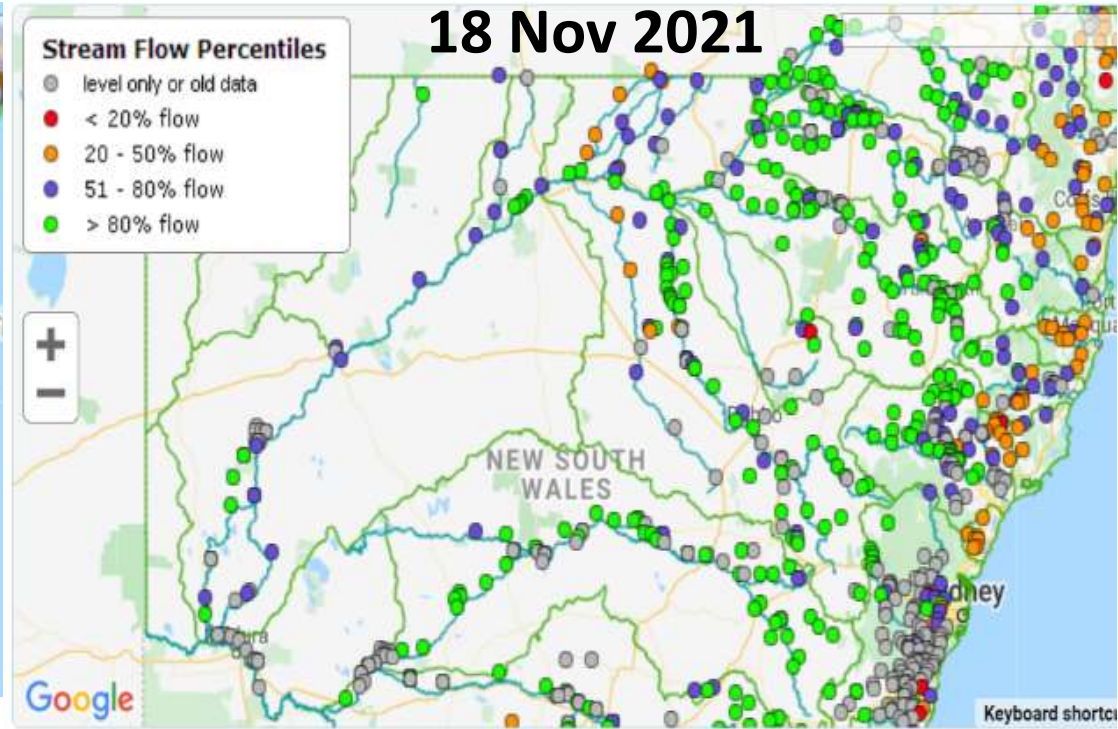
# Current conditions now?

<https://realtimedata.watnsw.com.au/>

Nov 2020



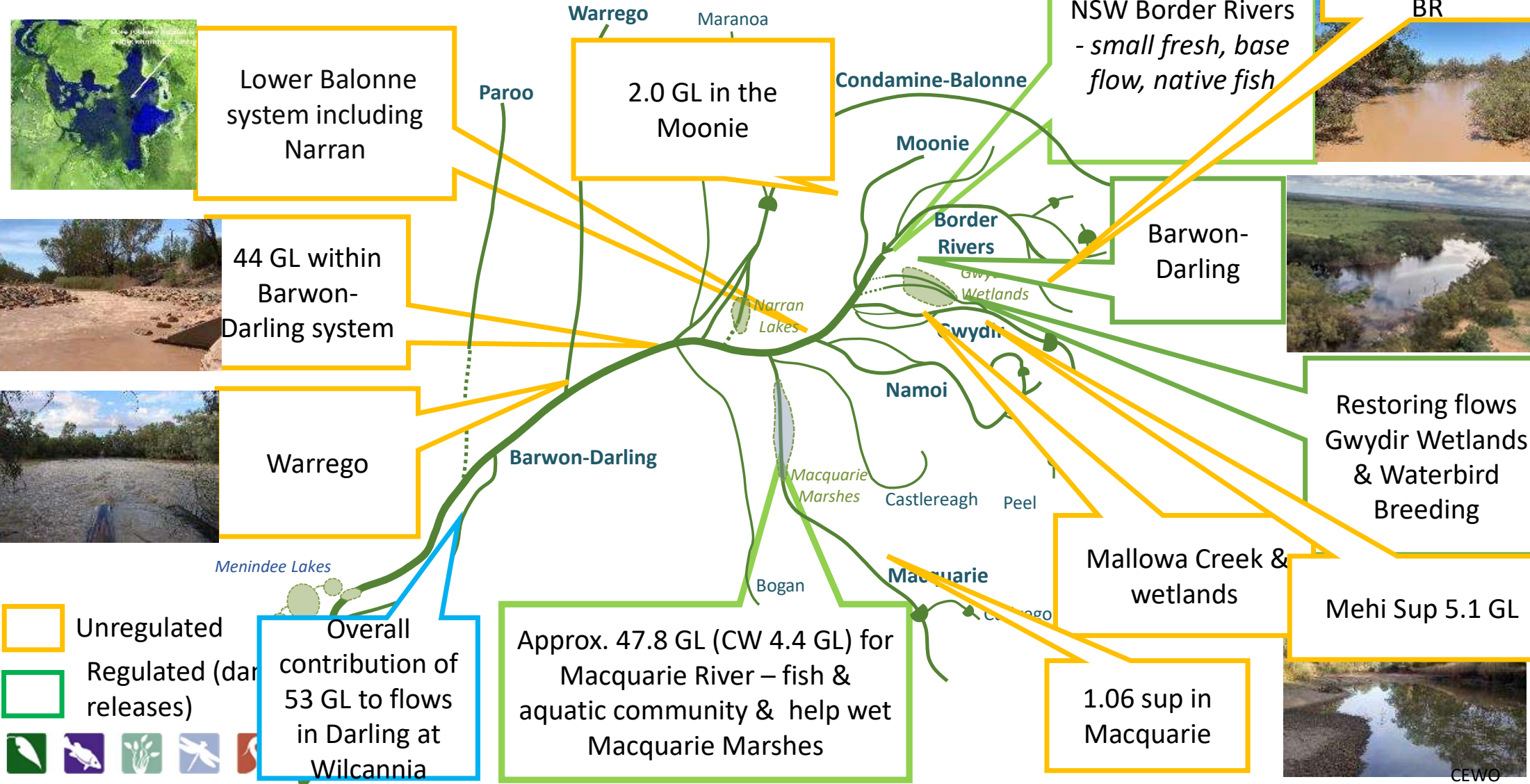
18 Nov 2021



Currently NSW & Qld Northern Basin – mixed – wetter east of Barwon-Darling, drier north and west from minor floods to in some places low flows



# Summary of 2021-22 YTD water for environment use





# Communications

Australian Government  
Commonwealth Environmental Water Office

NSW  
GOVERNMENT  
In partnership with:  
Department of Planning,  
Industry and Environment

## Macquarie River Valley 2020–21: Event Update #2

30 October 2020

### Flows for fish and wetlands

Delivery of NSW and Commonwealth water for the environment in the Macquarie catchment began in early October 2020. This water is supporting the recovery of native fish, particularly Murray cod, and core wetland vegetation in the Macquarie Marshes.



Macquarie Marshes, spring 2020 (CEWDO)

### Why deliver water now?

Murray cod spawn from submerged nests during spring when water temperatures are above 18°C. Much of the spawning is expected to occur this year around Trangie. Providing relatively stable flows using water for the environment during this time to keep nests underwater will give these fish the best opportunity to successfully breed this year.

The timing and duration of flows to the Macquarie Marshes is also critical for the recovery of this internationally significant wetland system. Rainfall and tributary flows in early 2020 have helped to inundate parts of the Marshes and have primed many plants to be ready to grow, flower, and set seed. Plants in core wetland areas typically need 2–3 months of inundation over the post-frost months to allow them to flourish. This gives them a better chance to out-compete weeds such as Ippia and

noogoora burr. More water is also needed in October and November to help wetland animals such as frogs and waterbirds to breed and young to grow and disperse. Some of these flows may come from tributaries downstream of Burrendong – we'll adapt to natural flows as they come.

### Progress of the flow

Since early October this water has targeted a relatively stable flow between 1,000 to 2,000 ML/day in the mid-Macquarie River as planned to support Murray cod nesting. Water temperatures downstream of Dubbo have reached above 18°C for several weeks in October, which is suitable for cod breeding.



Murray cod larvae from the Macquarie River in October 2020 (NSW DPI – Fisheries)

Once the key spawning time of early October has passed, flows will increase in November to provide opportunities for newly hatched fish to disperse while still maintaining inundation in the Marshes and connection to the Barwon. The increased duration of a connection between the Macquarie and Barwon Rivers will provide opportunities for migratory fish species, such as golden, silver and spangled perch to move into the lower parts of the Macquarie River, through the Marshes and further upstream.

1800 803 772 E: [ewater@environment.gov.au](mailto:ewater@environment.gov.au) W: [www.environment.gov.au/cewo](http://www.environment.gov.au/cewo) @theCEWDO

Australian Government  
Commonwealth Environmental Water Office

NSW  
GOVERNMENT  
In partnership with:  
Department of Planning,  
Industry and Environment

## Gwydir refuge pool flow 2020 – Update 1, 27 October

### Helping fish recover from the drought


#### How is the system looking now?

Since April 2020, flows along the Gwydir River have decreased and some channels within the lower Gwydir have stopped flowing. One area of concern is the Mehi River upstream of Combadello Weir, which is about 20 km southwest of Moree. Parts of this river have not flowed since August 2020.

Recent monitoring has shown that deep pools along the upper Mehi River provide important refuge habitat for native fish during extended dry periods.



Natural refuge pools along the Mehi River between Moree and Combadello Weir (10 January 2020). Photo: UNE



Mehi River upstream of Edward Street River Pool / downstream of Moree Town Weir (19 October 2020). Photo: CEWDO

#### Objectives:

Native fish survival by providing access to refuge habitat and food, increasing connectivity and improving water quality in pools

#### Dates:

Late Spring to Summer 2020-21

#### Volume:

12 – 14 GL has been allocated

#### Other flows:

Where possible, deliveries will be coordinated with releases from Copeton Dam for other purposes

#### Target areas:

Large refuge pools in the Gwydir between Copeton Dam and Tyree Weir, Mehi between Tareelaro and Combadello Weir and Carole Creek to near Garah.

### What happened last year

The 2019-20 water year in the Gwydir system began very dry and finished quite wet. Very low falls occurred between July and December 2019. The 2019 calendar year was the driest recorded since 1965. Above average rainfall occurred in January to April 2020, which saw several flows through the full length of the river system. Very heavy rainfall resulted in localised inundation in areas west of Moree in February and March 2020.

Monitoring of refuge pools during spring and summer 2019-20 showed that during no flow periods, water quality and depth within pools declined significantly. Maintaining water quality and depth is important within larger refuge pools to provide native fish species with the best chance of survival. This was the focus of our watering last year.

Results from monitoring undertaken along the Gwydir River between May to July 2020 showed most native fish species had spawned and recruited in the past year. Whilst the overall numbers of native fish were modest, most individuals sampled appeared in good health.

Native fish were found in the upper Mehi River, a channel that experienced poor water quality during spring and early summer of 2019-20. This is a positive sign that the fish community in this part of the system is recovering.

### Pool refuge flows

If flows from upstream systems do not provide water into the Mehi River soon, Commonwealth and NSW water for the environment may be used to replenish pools along the Mehi River through Moree and downstream to Combadello Weir. The last time water for the environment was delivered here from storage was January 2020.

To fit in with local farmers' winter crops, water for the environment will not be used for watercourse-wetland areas along the lower Gwydir and Gingham until after winter crop harvests have been completed. Natural flows may still occur in this area at any time.





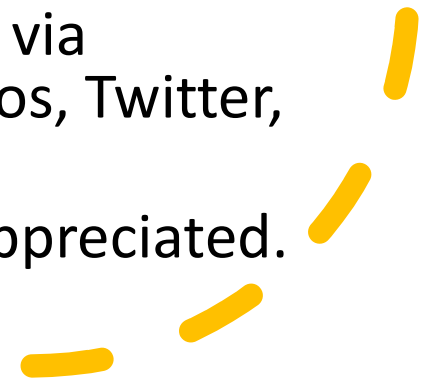
Some of the  
places and  
people!



# BROC & Local Councils engagement

## Engagement with MDA - potential discussion points:

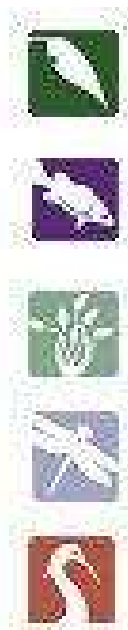
- Advice re what is needed and wanted?
- With MDA, BROC, Local Councils
- Any advice/links re other groups?
- The what, when, where and how?  
(e.g. What sort of information needed, frequency, types - is it phone calls, emails, updates, videos, meetings, how often, at meetings, updates??)
- Options for sharing information via websites, radio, local papers, videos, Twitter, Facebook, meetings??
- Any thoughts re this would be appreciated.





If you would like further information or to discuss any of this along with any further questions, comments, feedback, this is welcome now (and anytime)

Thanks for the opportunity to meet, share and discuss with you today



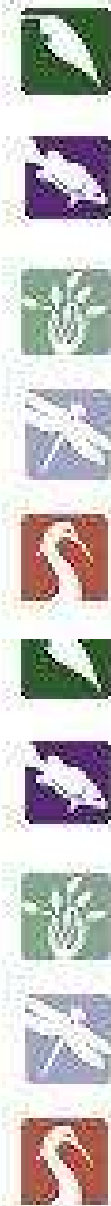
**Mr Jason Wilson**

Local Engagement Officer, Northern Basin  
Commonwealth Environmental Water Office  
Walgett NSW 2400  
M: 0418 210 389  
[Jason.Wilson@awe.gov.au](mailto:Jason.Wilson@awe.gov.au)  
[www.environment.gov.au](http://www.environment.gov.au)

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**Commonwealth Environmental Water Office  
Department of Agriculture, Water and  
Environment**

GPO Box 858 | Canberra ACT 2601 | Australia



**Sall Dickinson**

Local Engagement Officer, Northern Basin  
Commonwealth Environmental Water Office  
Goondiwindi Qld |  
M: 0448 759 650  
[Sall.Dickinson@awe.gov.au](mailto:Sall.Dickinson@awe.gov.au)  
[www.environment.gov.au](http://www.environment.gov.au)

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**Jane Humphries**

Local Engagement Officer, Northern Basin  
Commonwealth Environmental Water Office  
Moree NSW 2400  
M: 0437 141 495  
[Jane.Humphries@awe.gov.au](mailto:Jane.Humphries@awe.gov.au)  
[www.environment.gov.au](http://www.environment.gov.au)

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**Commonwealth Environmental Water Office  
Department of Agriculture, Water and  
Environment**

GPO Box 858 | Canberra ACT 2601 | Australia